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S E R M O N

PREACH'D AT

St. *Andrew's*, DUBLIN,

BEFORE THE-HONOURABLE

House of Commons,

ON SUNDAY THE

Twenty-third of *October*, 1743.

Being the Anniversary of the

IRISH REBELLION.

By BENJAMIN BACON, D. D.

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D U B L I N :

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Mercurii 26^o Die Octobris 1743^o.

ORDERED,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Doctor Benjamin Bacon, for the excellent Sermon by him preach'd before this House on Sunday last, being the 23^d of this Instant October, at St. Andrew's Church; and that he be desired to print the same, and that Doctor Trotter and Mr. Thomas Lehunte do acquaint him therewith.

Isaac Ambrose,

&

Burdett Worthington,

} Cl. Parl.

} Dom. Com.

S E R M O N

PREACH'D AT

St. Andrew's, DUBLIN, &c.

St. LUKE, Chap. x. Ver. 36, 37.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou was neighbour to him who fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.

IT hath been justly observed of Societies in general, that they are apt to vary by insensible degrees from their original constitution, and in process of time to be corrupted, unless they happen by accidents to be frequently purged and brought back to their first principles. As power increases, they

they may come at length, through design in some, and inadvertency in others, to lose sight of the point they set out from, and suffer a total change in some of their fundamental institutions.

The doctrine of persecution on account of religion, furnishes us with a notable instance of the truth of this observation with regard to ecclesiastical societies. A doctrine, as directly opposite to the spirit of the Gospel, as it is to the dictates of humanity, which crept into the Christian Church by degrees under various pretences; and at length became established by the Church of *Rome* in her most solemn councils as a necessary and meritorious duty. It is well known, that an uniform perseverance in extirpating all whom she was pleased to call *Heretics*, as far as her power reached, has been the undisputed character of that Church for many ages past; and must continue such as long as the Papal power subsists.

If a stranger to the Christian religion was to be informed of these facts, he would naturally conclude that our Law-giver had commanded his disciples to propagate his religion by all methods of open violence or private treachery; or at least that he had been silent upon the point, and had not expressly prohibited such measures. But how astonished would he be to find, that the case is quite otherwise?

otherwise? That there is no duty so frequently and earnestly recommended to us in Scripture as the love of one another; nothing more severely prohibited than hatred and persecution on any account whatsoever. That the whole spirit of the Gospel is *peace and good will among men*; and that it is required of all Christians even to *love their enemies, to bless them that curse them, to do good to them that hate them, and to pray for them that despitefully use them and persecute them*.

Among many passages of Scripture to this purpose, the parable, of which the words I have read to you are the conclusion, comes fully up to the point, and leaves no room for evasion.

This parable is in answer to a certain Lawyer, who applied to our Lord as one that humbly desired instruction in a thing of the greatest importance, and nearest concernment to every one, *What shall I do*, says he, *to inherit eternal life?* For answer to this question our Saviour refers him to the Law of Moses as we have it, partly in *Deuteronomy* and partly in *Leviticus*: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thy self.* Thus far the Lawyer could not but approve of the doctrine, as it was no more than the words of the Law, of which he

he was by profession an interpreter, and pretended to be a strict observer. But being willing to justify himself, he asked farther, *What is my neighbour?* A question as greatly misunderstood at that time among the Jews, as it has been since among too many Christians. For the Jews, though extremely scrupulous in observing the ceremonial part of the *Mosaic Law*, had rendered the moral and more material part of no effect by their traditions and false interpretations. Thus they understood the word *Neighbour* to relate only to those of their own nation and way of worship; and considered all others, but more especially the *Samaritans*, whom they thought Schismatics, as having no right to the common offices of humanity.

This inhuman notion our Saviour refutes by a parable, admirably fitted to confound the self-sufficient enquirer, and leave him nothing to reply. A certain man, says he, went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain Priest that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side; And likewise a Levite when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was,

was, and when he saw him he had compassion on him bound up his wounds and took care of him: Which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbour to him that fell amongst the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.

A few plain observations upon this parable will shew us the true temper of Christianity, and give occasion at the same time to remark how far the Church of *Rome* has departed from it.

And in the second place our Saviour's command, *Go and do thou likewise*, will naturally suggest some reflections as to our conduct with respect to those of that communion who live among us.

First then it is to be observed, that the main scope and intent of the parable, was to correct that inhuman notion of the *Jews*, in confining their charity to those of their own nation and religion; and to teach us, that all men are our Neighbours, and entitled to offices of humanity as far as our abilities reach, however they may, differ from us in any respect. And this the parable sets forth in the strongest terms. For the *Samaritans* were the people of all others whom the *Jews* held in the greatest abhorrence. They considered them as Schismatics and Heretics, who had set up altar against altar, and their resentment rose to such a
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height, that they cut off all manner of commerce and communication with that people; and denounced a most bitter and uncharitable curse against them. Accordingly we find, the *Jews*, when they would express the greatest detestation of our Lord and his doctrine, said, *he was a Samaritan and had a devil.*

If then the common ties of humanity could be dissolved between any people upon any account whatsoever, it must have been betwixt the *Jew* and the *Samaritan*. And therefore the case put by our Lord is the strongest that could be devised, to shew that every man is our Neighbour, however alienated from us by religious differences, or the most bitter resentment and hatred. We may to the same purpose add the memorable rebuke our Lord gave to his disciples, who would have called down fire from heaven upon the *Samaritan* village: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives but to save them.*

Such is the temper of Christianity, and agreeable to it was the practice of the first ages of the Church. But scarce did the Heathens cease to persecute Christians, when Christians began to persecute one another; and under pretence of maintaining unity, Ambition took advantage of party rage to establish tyranny. As arguments will never
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be wanting to support power, the simplicity of the Gospel was soon corrupted, and doctrines introduced as contradictory to it as darkness to light; till by degrees the Church of *Rome* arrived to that height of corruption in principle, and barbarity in practice, which the Christian world has groaned under for many ages past. It is only calling those who differ from them *Heretics*, and all ties both of Christianity and Humanity are dissolved. The Inquisition spares none where it is established; and every Bishop of that Church swears, in express words at his consecration, to persecute Heretics, Schismatics, and Rebels to the Pope, to the utmost of his power. Where ordinary methods fail, conspiracies, assassinations, and massacres supply their place; and the history of this day will inform us, that the relations of neighbourhood, friendship, affinity or blood, are no security against the rage of mistaken zeal, and cruelty founded on religious principle. Even at present, when the edge of persecution is supposed to be much worn off every where; and in *France*, reputed the most civilized, and least bigotted country of that communion, it is certain death for any Protestant Clergyman to do any one office of his ministry. Scarce a year passes without executions on that account, and some with exquisite tortures.

Secondly,

Secondly, We may observe that our Saviour extorts a confession from his adversary of the truth of what he would advance, by his manner of stating the case. He supposes the *Samaritan* found the *Jew* in distress, and relieved him, and not the *Jew* the *Samaritan*. Had he supposed the latter, his adversary instead of applauding the *Jew* for shewing mercy to the *Samaritan*, would probably have condemned him for having any communication with, or giving any assistance to an Heretic, one under the curse and execration of the *Jewish* people; and would rather have approved of the conduct of the Priest and Levite, who *shunned him, and passed by on the other side*.

But when one of his own brethren, a *Jew*, was described to him in circumstances of such distress, naked, wounded, and half dead; he could not forbear commending the behaviour of the person who had compassion on him, though he was a *Samaritan*. This confession our Saviour takes hold of, and urges him from his own judgment, *Go and do thou likewise*: Follow the example you commend, and consider every one, even a *Samaritan*, as your neighbour.

But it has been said there is a distinction in the case, that it is right a Heretic should relieve a Catholic in distress, or in other words, that a professor

feffor of a false religion ought to shew mercy to one of the true religion: but the obligation is not mutual. A professor of the true religion is so far from being obliged to do offices of humanity to the other, that he may, and ought to persecute him.

This distinction hath been seriously maintained by the learned men of the Church of *Rome*, tho' nothing can be more absurd; for in effect, it gives the stronger a right to persecute the weaker, without any regard to truth or falshood, seeing every one thinks his own religion true, and must be determined by his own conscience. But the parable before us is related with such circumstances as pluck it up by the roots, and leave no pretence whatever for breaking through the common obligations of humanity. For it is to be observed that the *Samaritans* were not only thought by the *Jews* to be Heretics; but they were really such. Our Lord himself determines against them in his discourse with the *Samaritan* woman in St. *John's* Gospel. *Ye worship, says he, ye know not what, we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.* Yet he declares the *Jew* was obliged to shew mercy to the *Samaritan*, as well as the *Samaritan* to the *Jew*.

Thirdly, We are told that the Priest and Levite who had in a particular manner dedicated themselves to the service of religion, when they saw their brother in distress, shut up their bowels, and passed by. Whence we may observe, there is no concluding with certainty from any ones profession or appearance of sanctity, that he is a good man; tho' these are reasonable presumptions in his favour till the contrary appears. The surest test to distinguish reality from appearance in religion, is, as our Saviour tells us, by its fruits; and the natural fruits of true religion are *peace and good will among men*. The love of our brethren is inseparable from the love of God, and whoever pretends to the one without the other, St. James tells us, *is a liar*.

Too many of all Sects make strong pretences to religion without charity, though nothing can be more inconsistent. If this be only the spirit of the man, and not of his profession, it cannot become so general as to produce great mischief. But how deplorable is the condition of that Church, which is so far from restraining this unchristian spirit in its members, that it has adopted uncharitableness among its principles, and recommends persecution as a Christian virtue. In consequence of which, the more zealous any one of that communion is, the more likely he is to do mischief in
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the world. What can be expected from the people, when the Priest and Levite tell them it is a good work to destroy Heretics, and that they serve God by injuring their neighbour?

We need not therefore be surprized at a well known fact; that in those countries where the Inquisition prevails; when a number of innocent people are publicly tortured and burnt, for no other crime but serving God according to their consciences, the spectacle is so far from raising horror and compassion in the multitude, that it is beheld with pleasure, and applauded by all. Is it that those people are naturally of a more cruel disposition than their neighbours? By no means! For none shew more concern at executions upon any other occasion; but their want of feeling in this particular case is the effect of wicked doctrines instilled into them by their teachers from their infancy.

Though it generally happens that wicked doctrines extinguish humanity, we may observe on the other side, from the example of the *Samaritan*, that in some instances, a good disposition may prevail over a bad principle and a corrupt religion. For we gather from the behaviour of the *Samaritans* to our Saviour, when they would not suffer him to enter into their village for refreshment, because his
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fact was as though he would go to Jerusalem, that they carried their uncharitable notions as high as the Jews did theirs, yet we find the Man prevailed over the Samaritan, and compassion over prejudice, so that he took up the distressed Jew, and relieved him effectually.

An accident of the same kind prevented the massacre of this day from being universal. One man, of the numbers who must have been let into the secret, revealed the conspiracy a few hours before it was to have been put into execution in this city. We have likewise traditional accounts of several instances of humanity and gratitude among the lower people in those times, notwithstanding the horrible precepts and example of their Priests and Levites, their Clergy both secular and regular.

But enough has been said as to the first part of my design, to shew the temper of Christianity, and how incredibly the Church of *Rome* has departed from it.

The Second thing proposed was the application of our Saviour's command to ourselves, *Go and do thou likewise*. How we are to behave ourselves to those of that communion who live among us.

Though their principles and practices might justify the severest measures on our side, and they who

who maintain the doctrine of persecution have no right to indulgence, *we have not so learned Christ*: And may we always continue to *know what manner of spirit we are of*, and to return good for evil as far as is any way consistent with our security. They enjoy the free exercise of their religion in a manner little differing in fact from a legal toleration; and that they have not the name as well as the thing, is the fault of their profession, which renders them incapable of giving any reasonable security to the government for their good behaviour. For how can that be done, while their consciences are under the direction of one who claims a power of dispensing with the most sacred obligations, who supports a Pretender to His Majesty's Throne, and is himself a Pretender to a spiritual tyranny over these kingdoms? Yet they enjoy the common blessings of our constitution with very little abridgment, which self-preservation has made necessary; and if any harshness appears in some of our Laws with respect to their Clergy, it is well known they were intended to prevent treason against the State, and are never executed on any account merely religious. No one envies them this indulgence, nor thinks of lessening it as long as they use it with modesty and gratitude. Let them reflect a little upon the unhappy case of the Protestants

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stants in *France* before-mentioned, who are utterly deprived of Pastors: Nay let them farther reflect upon the condition of any subjects, of any Popish Prince whatsoever, and say whether, upon the whole, their own be not much more eligible.

When therefore our gracious King exposes his sacred person in defence of the liberties of *Europe*, and is become the glorious instrument of Providence to *break the jaws of the wicked, and pluck the spoil out of his teeth*; as they partake of the common blessing, it is their duty to concur in making the exultation general among his people; to acknowledge his lenity and goodness to all his subjects, and that he is only terrible to the disturbers of the peace and happiness of mankind.

But the example of the good *Samaritan* points out to us something more than bare indulgence. He bound up the man's wounds, pouring in oyl and wine, and spared neither pains nor expence in taking care of him; and the *Jew* is commanded to do likewise to the *Samaritan*. The common people of the natives of this kingdom are really in a deplorable condition, naked, wounded, and half dead, through idleness, superstition, and ignorance. They are our fellow-creatures; they are our fellow-christians, though with the most gross corruption of many essential doctrines; both duty
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and interest call upon us to relieve them: And the only effectual way of doing it, is to endeavour by all Christian methods to make them our fellow-prottestants.

It may well be asked why so little hath been attempted in that way for a century past. Whatever effect laws relating to property may have upon the better sort, they neither have had, nor ever can have any upon the vulgar. Motives of a different nature must be applied to them, if we hope for success; and I presume it will not be thought foreign to the occasion of our present meeting, to offer some considerations on that subject.

People bred up in extream ignorance, and grown old in religious prejudices, are hardly prevailed upon to listen to better information; especially if they have been taught that their Priests are to judge for them, and that all doubt or enquiry on their parts is a sinful curiosity. There is a certain time of life, when few of any sort will suffer their religious principles to be called in question; and the case is still more desperate when these are founded upon implicit faith, the persons unaccustomed to rational enquiries, and imbittered on other accounts against those who endeavour to convert them. These difficulties with many others attending the conversion of the natives of this kingdom, gave
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rife to a late ſcheme for applying to the growing generation, by erecting ſchools for the education of children. Accordingly it hath been carried into execution, under the ſanction of His Maſteſty's Charter, with ſpirit and ſucceſs, though as yet within a narrow compaſs.

And ſurely this ſeems the moſt probable means human wiſdom can deviſe of answering the end, if ſtrongly ſupported and ſteadily purſued. For in theſe ſchools, induſtry and knowledge are equally conſulted, before habits of ſloth be contracted, or religious prejudices imbibed : Agriculture, manufactures, and of courſe trade, will ſpread every where, and the nation be enriched in proportion as it is enlightened.

The deſign ſeems more particularly well adapted to extend that manufacture which is our chief ſupport, and has ſo deſervedly engroſſed the attention of all. For theſe ſchools under proper direction will become nurseries to breed up the different kinds of manufacturers requiſite to carry on the buſineſs, and the example will not fail to operate powerfully all around. The common people every where have a ſtrong averſion to new undertakings, which nothing but example can get the better of. Would you perſuade them to do what they have not been accuſtomed to? Set an example before

before their eyes; let them see the thing done, and the gain arising from it, and they will be quickly tempted to come in for a share. And though the beginnings should be but rude and coarse, as must be expected from children however well instructed, it will answer the purpose; for the difficulty is to set the manufacture on foot in any way, time will refine, and bring it to perfection.

A laudable spirit hath universally appeared of late, to improve agriculture in all its branches. Whether these schools might not be likewise rendered useful in that way, is a point that seems to deserve consideration. Skilful Directors may be had from our neighbouring kingdom, where they abound, and small portions of land may suffice for an example, which is the thing principally wanted.

This undertaking hath hitherto depended upon private contributions, by which the Society has been enabled to make the experiment, and satisfy the Publick from the success of those few schools already erected and maintained, what might be expected from means equal to the demands.

But whether so small and precarious a fund will be thought sufficient for so great a work, or whether some public bounty might not be usefully bestowed in a way so essential to public security, is a question of too much consequence to escape the

consideration of those, who by their wisdom and experience are best qualified, and by the trust reposed in them have a right to determine such matters. It will occur that what is expended to circulate at home, cannot impoverish the community; and that there is no cause to apprehend the misapplication of a fund that depends upon voluntary and temporary supplies, and is so much the object of general observation.

But farther, there are other means wanting to accomplish this good work, and render the effect permanent. *The harvest is great, the labourers few*, in those parts where they are most wanted, in proportion as the emissaries of the Church of Rome abound. It is said that in three of our provinces, there are five of those, either secular or regular, for one Protestant Minister of any denomination. The contest must be very unequal, nor can it be expected that reason and argument, however evincing, should prevail in any considerable degree, against inveterate prejudices both national and religious, supported by such a superiority of numbers. Yet notwithstanding this and other difficulties before-mentioned, I believe it will be found a fact, that wherever a Minister of the established Church has been constantly resident, exemplary in his life, and tolerably diligent, he has
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not failed to gather a decent congregation in time.

The last and not the least powerful means of converting the natives, is to be expected from the joint endeavours of Gentlemen of figure and fortune in their several countries. It is they, and they only, who have it in their power to make and unmake fashions, with respect to religion and morals as well as to indifferent things. The common people are easily induced to think favourably of the religion of their superiors if they see and feel the good effects of it; and to think otherwise, if the Great who profess it, live as if they did not believe it.

When therefore a person of condition is sensible of this important truth, that *to whom much is given, from him much shall be required*; when he endeavours to excel others in knowledge, goodness, and virtue of every kind, as much as he does in authority and fortune; and labours to render all within his reach and influence good by his example and happy by his bounty! Such a one, I say, will soon attract the love, esteem, and admiration of all about him, which naturally beget a disposition to conclude, that one who acts so well, does not judge amiss, and that a religion productive of such fruits must be *rooted and ground-*
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ed in truth. His unaffected piety and constant attendance on divine worship will draw numbers along with him, and make sincere profelytes in the most uncivilized and bigotted parts of the kingdom.

On the contrary, should it ever happen that attention to these things becomes unfashionable; that estates are considered only as a fund for rioting, and an exemption from common decency; that a regard for things serious and sacred is want of taste, and time spent at divine service, as so much lost to pleasure or business; that religion is not the concern of the Great, and only fit to be preached by those who are paid for it, and listened to by the vulgar! Should such notions and practices at any time prevail, it requires no great sagacity to foresee the consequence; that far from converting others, our own people will be perverted, by those who are always upon the watch to make profelytes, and will not miss so fair an opportunity; besides a general dissolution of morals among all ranks and denominations.

Upon the whole, though more than a century is past since the intended general massacre of this day, and more than half a century since another deliverance equally critical and providential, let us not vainly imagine that the spirit of Popery is mollified,

mollified, or we out of the reach of danger: Times and circumstances may arise, when even disarmed numbers become formidable; and it is no comfortable situation to be surrounded with neighbours, who cannot conceal their joy upon some occasions, nor their sorrow upon others, when we are affected in a different manner. Every commotion in *Europe* gives us some alarms and apprehensions at home: If religion can be indifferent to any, safety is the concern of all.

The Protestant cause in general seemed of late quite desperate, and the ballance of power upon which it depends. It hath pleased God of his infinite mercy to dispell our fears, by strengthening His Majesty's hands, and making him triumph over the Oppressor.

Praised be the Lord daily, even the God who helpeth us and poureth his benefits upon us! Let us offer unto him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and tell out his works with gladness; his signal mercies to us and our ancestors, in the repeated preservation of our religion and liberties when they were upon the brink of destruction. We of these nations have more real liberty, both civil and religious, than any people upon earth; let us beware of abusing it, and turning it to licentiousness: Extreame is nearly allied, faction naturally ends in slavery, and

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profaneness in superstition. Let us shew ourselves truly sensible of the blessings we enjoy, and resolve to supply what is wanting on our parts to co-operate with the gracious dispensations of Providence, Our heavenly Father *hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickednesses*; let us express our gratitude to him, and secure the continuance of his mercies by the reformation of our lives; *by turning every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands, and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.*

F I N I S